

# A History of Transportation in Lincoln, Nebraska

December 16, 2003



## Transportation is Evolutionary and Dynamic



## History of Transportation

- Modes of transportation evolutionary and dynamic
- Four dominant eras of transportation in Lincoln's history:
  - Horse and Buggy
  - Streetcar
  - Bus
  - Automobile
- Bicycling and walking used throughout eras in evolutionary pattern as well

## Establishment of a Capitol

- 1859
  - Lancaster County is organized and platted with a grid pattern of streets
  - County law established making county roads 4 rods wide, or 66 feet
- 1867
  - Nebraska becomes a state and Lincoln is formed as its capitol
  - Street right-of-way widths set at 100 feet with extra 20 feet added to "special" streets such as O Street
- 1869
  - University of Nebraska founded

## Original Plat of Lincoln - 1867



## Railroads Spur Growth

- 1870
  - Population of Lincoln is 2,500
  - 1870 - Burlington and Missouri River Railroad reaches Lincoln
  - 1877 - Union Pacific Railroad reaches Lincoln
- 1880
  - Population of Lincoln is 13,000
  - 1886 - Missouri Pacific and Chicago & Northwestern Railroads arrive
- 1890
  - Population of Lincoln is 55,000

## Burlington Station – 7th and P Street, 1880



## Developments in Local Transportation



- Prior to introduction of the streetcar, the horse and buggy is the dominant form of travel
- During 1880s, extreme population growth expands city limits in all directions except northwest
- League of American Wheelmen formed in 1880 and lobbies for better roads. Begins The Good Roads Movement. Bicycling a recreational hobby.
- In 1888, cedar block used for first time in the business district as an upgrade from dirt roads

## View North on 11<sup>th</sup> Street to University Hall, 1889



## Palace Livery Stables



## First Bicycles - The High Wheel and the Yale Pneumatic

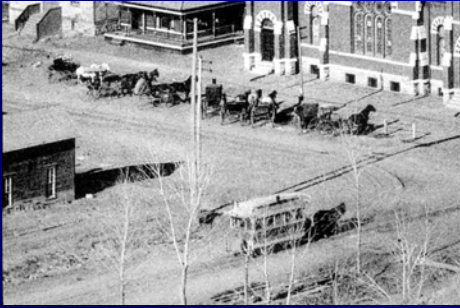


## Streetcar Era 1883-1925



- 1883
  - Lincoln Street Railway Company begins first horse-drawn streetcar line between Burlington Depot and 13th and O Street. Capital City Street Railway also begins operations.
- 1887
  - Lincoln Belt Line, South Lincoln Street Railway Company, and Rapid Transit open
- Streetcar lines begin to link the city to surrounding areas with Downtown as the hub.

## Horse Drawn Streetcar, c. 1889



## Streetcar Era 1883-1925



- 1890
  - Five streetcar companies operating in Lincoln with 54 cars, 92 employees, and 31.6 miles of track, and 1,744,784 passengers annually
- 1891
  - Electric streetcars start operating and horse-pulled cars begin to be phased out
- 1890's
  - Several colleges founded on outskirts of Lincoln, with separate towns forming at University Place, Bethany Heights, and College View. Streetcar lines link these towns to Lincoln.

## Electric Streetcars, c. 1900

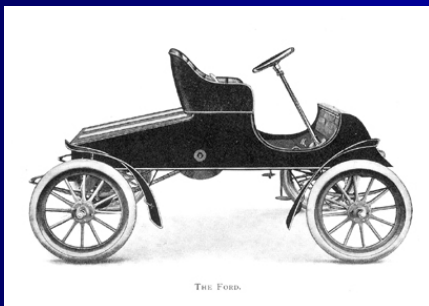


## Streetcar Era 1883-1925



- 1895
  - Four experimental automobiles in existence
- 1902
  - The first automobile reportedly rolls down the streets of Lincoln. The American Automobile Association (AAA) is formed. 17 million horses and 23,000 cars in United States. Automobiles only affordable to the rich.
- 1905
  - Not a single mile of paved roadway exists in the United States even though there are over 2 million miles of road nationwide.

## Ford Model A, 1903



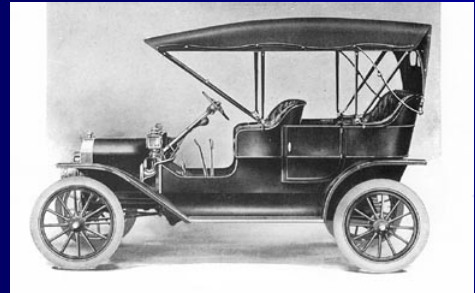
## Old City Hall, 9th and O Street, c. 1900



## Streetcar Era 1883-1925

- 1906
  - The Lyman horse car on the Belmont Line ceases operation as the last horse-pulled streetcar
- 1907
  - Streetcar line on N Street east to 29th to S Street to Wyuka completed.
  - Other lines completed were west on Holdrege to the Fairgrounds, east on Vine to 33rd, south on 12th to South Street, and east to 19th.
- 1908
  - Line to College View is completed

## Ford Model T, 1909



## Streetcar Era 1883-1925

- 1910
  - Over 11,000 automobiles registered in Nebraska. The State begins to respond to demand for better roads for automobiles.
- 1911
  - State Board of Irrigation, Highways, and Drainage formed. Its secretary is required to be a civil engineer and is called the State Engineer.
- 1912
  - Highland line to College View down Sheridan Boulevard is opened

## Dedication of Lincoln Statue in Capital Building, 1912



## Streetcar Era 1883-1925

- Summary of Nebraska's automobile laws in the 1913 Official Road Book of the Nebraska State Automobile Association:
  - "Register with the Secretary of State in Lincoln; fee \$2.00 per year. No provision is made for individual operating licenses. Owner must provide his own tags. Non-residents are exempt if they have their own state tags. Speed limits: 10 mph in business sections, 15 mph in residence districts, 20 mph elsewhere. Lights: one or more white lights in front and a red light in the rear."

## Streetcar Era 1883-1925

- 1914
  - Little to no roadway markings on Nebraska roads
  - The Omaha-Lincoln-Denver Highway (U.S. 6 and 34 today) is considered one of only three major highways in the state in 1914 according to State Engineer Donald Price
  - Production of motor vehicles in the United States exceeds the output of wagons and carriages for the first time



## O.L.D. Roadway Marker On O Street



## Unpaved Roadway Issues



## Streetcar Era 1883-1925

- 1916
  - Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 is passed and begins the process of federal-state cooperation for roadway development and improvement
- 1918
  - First federal aid road project in Nebraska, FAP No. 1, begins on the road between Lincoln and Emerald (West O Street)
- 1920
  - Vehicle registration in Nebraska reaches 223,000

## Terminal Building, Headquarters of Lincoln Traction Company, 1916



## Streetcar Era 1883-1925

- 1920s
  - A "golden age" for road building with Roaring 20s economy, demand for better roads, and federal funding program. Motor vehicles, including buses, begin rise to prominence.
- 1921
  - Eleven automobile highways radiating out of Lincoln. Car dealers are now commonplace.
- 1922
  - The Gunny's Complex is built at 13th and Q Street in Downtown Lincoln. Built as a showplace and home for Nebraska Buick Automobile Company.

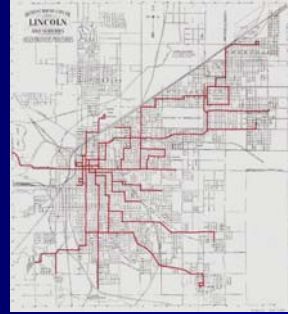
## Main Highways through Lincoln, 1921



## Gunny's Complex



## Extent of Streetcar Lines in 1924

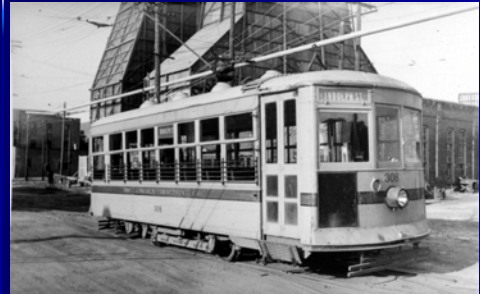


## Bus Era 1926-1945



- 1926-1930
  - Lincoln annexes surrounding college towns of University Place, Bethany, and College View, and industrial Havelock. Buses begin to replace streetcars throughout the city.
- 1926
  - Lincoln Traction Company starts its first bus routes between Downtown and University Place
- 1927
  - The Capital Beach Line substitutes buses for streetcars. Three additional bus lines started by Lincoln Traction Company.

## Randolph Street Streetcar, c. 1930



## New Fleet of Buses, c. 1930



## Bus Era 1926-1945

- 1928
  - Alfred DuTeau opens his first Chevrolet dealership in Lincoln
- 1929
  - There are 419,000 motor vehicles registered in NE
- 1930
  - Driver education classes are first offered in high schools
- 1930s
  - Great Depression hits and road building is slowed dramatically

## DuTeau Car Dealership



## Towne Park/Union Bus Terminal, 1936



## Bus Era 1926-1945

- 1941
  - Road building comes to a standstill due to rationing of supplies and funding for the war effort
- The railroads carry 98% of military personnel in groups and 90% of military freight handled by inland transportation during the war. Highlights need for interstate program.

## Bus Era 1926-1945

- 1942
  - National City Lines acquires Lincoln Traction
- 1945
  - The last street car lines, Sheridan Boulevard line to College View, and the Randolph Street line, are shut down. Ironically, the peak annual patronage of buses and streetcars is reached this year at 11,674,000 passengers.

## Bus Use Post World War II, c. 1950



## Automobile Era 1945-Present

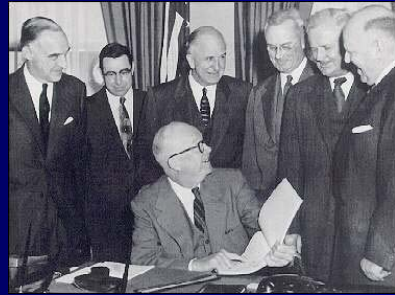


- 1949
  - Fare increase for the third consecutive year on Lincoln City Lines
- 1950s
  - Plans for construction of Interstate 80 through Nebraska begin
- 1952
  - City of Lincoln agrees to grant Lincoln City Lines an abatement from the franchise tax
  - First Comprehensive Plan adopted. New Zoning Ordinance requires sidewalks

## Automobile Era 1945-Present

- 1954
  - Lincoln City Lines ceases West O and Hospital routes
- 1956
  - The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956
    - "More than any single action by the government since the end of the war, this one would change the face of America. ....Its impact on the American economy - the jobs it would produce in manufacturing and construction, the rural areas it would open up - was beyond calculation." - President Eisenhower
    - Sets the groundwork for funding of the Interstate System to be built over the next 40 years

## 'Ike' Signs Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956



## Automobile Era 1945-Present

- 1957
  - Interstate 80 construction begins near Gretna
  - I-80 will take 17 years to complete construction in Nebraska and will be fully operational by 1974
- 1960
  - Gateway Mall opens 4 miles east of Downtown
- 1961
  - Second Comprehensive Plan adopted
    - Mentions need for bypass routes in conjunction with I-80

## Automobile Era 1945-Present

- 1966
  - The first Metropolitan Transportation Study is conducted. Auto-dominated.
    - "Since the end of World War II, there has been a phenomenal increase in car ownership...." "...the ratio of transit travel to total trips has steadily decreased in spite of continuing population increases. Transit riding in Lincoln has continued to decline in general accord with increases in suburbanization, automobile ownership and usage."
- 1968
  - Lincoln City Lines ends service at 8:15 PM weekdays and reduces Sunday service to 3 hours

## Automobile Era 1945-Present

- 1971
  - City of Lincoln takes over operations of the transit system naming it Lincoln Transportation System
  - U.S. 77 Lincoln - South Freeway, West and East Bypasses of Lincoln Corridor Study completed
- 1972
  - Thirty-three new full-sized buses placed into service and bus service is expanded throughout the city, with Downtown remaining the hub of the system
- 1972
  - The Highway 2 bicycle/pedestrian trail is included in study for the road improvement project

## 1971 Bypass Study





## Automobile Era 1945-Present

- 1973
  - Sunday bus service is discontinued
- 1976
  - The expanded "downtown loop" is initiated extending bus coverage in the downtown area
- 1977
  - Third City-County Comprehensive Plan recognizes bicycles as an element of the transportation system that requires special consideration. System of long range bike routes is recommended and includes both on-street and off-street facilities for both recreational and commuter purposes.

## Automobile Era 1945-Present



- 1978
  - Billy Wolff bike trail along Antelope Creek is developed as a bikeway demonstration project
- 1982
  - Evening bus service on Monday's and Thursday's is terminated
- 1987
  - Five peak hour express bus routes providing direct service from outlying areas to the Downtown started
- 1988
  - Lincoln Transportation System adopts the name Star Tran

## Automobile Era 1945-Present

- 1989
  - \$1.7 million bond issue passes providing for the development of the Rock Island Trail
- 1990
  - Final Downtown department store closes
- 1990
  - Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) passed
- 1991
  - Ridership on Star Tran falls to 6,000 passengers per day

## Rock Island Trail, North of A Street



## Automobile Era 1945-Present



- 1991
  - The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) is passed
- 1998
  - The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) is passed
- 2001
  - Comprehensive Plan is amended to include current alignments for East and South Beltways
- 2002
  - The 2025 Comprehensive Plan is adopted
    - Provides charge for a multi modal planning effort

## History of Transportation is a History of Lincoln

- Lincoln is a growing city since it was founded
  - Both in land area and population
- Different eras provide different patterns and rates of land development
  - Horse and buggy
  - Streetcar
  - Bus
  - Automobile